Calumet-Giles-Prairie District

PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

Submitted to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks
in February, 1987

CALUMET-GILES-PRAIRIE DISTRICT

Generally located between 31st and 35th streets,
along Calumet, Giles, and Prairie avenues

During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the Douglas community prospered as an affluent district whose streets were lined with handsomely detailed city residences. Beginning around 1910, the population changed from white to black while maintaining its upper-income identity. In what seems an inexorable urban cycle, the neighborhood underwent a dramatic economic and social shift during the Depression of the 1930s that brought about the neglect and ultimate deterioration of not only the distinctive architectural stock but the overall quality of life in the neighborhood. During the 1950s and '60s, urban renewal efforts indiscriminately razed most of the Victorian era homes in the community with the exception of a corridor referred to as the "Gap." Although intended by planners as a negative appellation to denote the only area that had not been leveled and redeveloped, the term has been used more recently in a positive tone to refer to the district in which the largest concentration of these historic homes survive. The greatest number of intact examples of the late nineteenth-century residential architecture is located on Calumet, Giles, and Prairie avenues between 31st and 35th streets. The rehabilitation efforts undertaken on these homes over the last several years is indicative of the strong identification area homeowners have with the historic heritage of Douglas and illustrates the significance they attached to historic preservation for furthering the quality of community life.

The Douglas community, as defined by sociologists from the University of Chicago during the 1920s and as perpetuated since then by public agencies for study and planning purposes, comprises the area east of Federal Street (100 west) between 26th and 39th streets. Its eastern borders are Lake Michigan, from 26th to 35th, and Vincennes Avenue (600 east) south of 35th Street. Rather than circumscribing one cohesive community, however, these boundaries actually contain a number of smaller communities that are

largely independent of one another. The community as viewed today dates from two principal development eras: a period spanning the last thirty years of the nineteenth century in which most of the community's stock of single-family dwellings were built, and an era of similar duration dating from the early 1950s during which large-scale urban renewal campaigns and similar private development efforts created extensive institutional bases and high-density housing developments. As a result, areas within Douglas vary widely in terms of architecture and age as well as economics and usage.

The middle-class, high-rise apartments on the eastern edge of the community are juxtaposed with similarly scaled, low-income public housing along the Dan Ryan Expressway on the west. In contrast to these dense residential developments are the dispersed institutional campuses of the Illinois Institute of Technology and Michael Reese Hospital. At the geographic center of the community, extending southward, is a corridor of nineteenth-century, single-family residences whose coloring, materials, degree of detailing, and overall design are a pleasing counterpoint to the twentieth century architecture that surrounds it. The diversity of developments found within present-day Douglas reflects the differences that characterized the community during the last half of the nineteenth century.

Douglas, 1850-1880: The Beginnings of an Urban Identity

The community takes its name from Senator Stephen A. Douglas (1813-1861), a nationally prominent figure during the mid-1800s. Douglas was instrumental in Chicago's development through both his public and private initiatives. As a legislator, he helped to obtain the federal land grant for the Illinois Central Railroad that ceded the 300-foot-wide strip of what was then submerged lakefront to the company. In allowing the railroad the right-of-way, the city gained a vital trade connection with New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico. As a private citizen, Douglas influenced the city through real estate speculation along the lakefront and in the Lake Calumet region. In 1852, Douglas bought a seventy-acre tract between 31st and 35th street west of the Illinois Central Railroad tracks. Two years later, he built his home, called Oakenwald, in the vicinity of Cottage Grove Avenue and 35th Street. The senator apparently had hopes of developing the surrounding land as an upscale enclave, based on his subdivision in 1855 of Groveland and Woodland parks. These two small-scale residential parks, having approximately thirty building lots apiece, are located between Cottage Grove Avenue and the Illinois Central tracks between 33rd Place and 35th Street. Their remoteness from the city deterred immediate comprehensive settlement; rather, dwellings were built intermittently over the course of the next forty years.

The establishment of these affluent residential subdivisions was complemented by Douglas' attempts to provide an institutional anchor to further encourage upper middle-class settlement. Douglas initially offered to donate land to the Presbyterian Church on the condition that they establish a school on the site. The Presbyterians turned down Douglas' offer, but Chicago Baptists accepted a similar gift in 1856 for the establishment of the University of Chicago four years later. The university remained in Douglas until

financial difficulties forced it to close in 1886. The school was reorganized in 1892 and relocated to Hyde Park.

Stephen Douglas' speculative ventures represented only one segment of the numberous development activities undertaken by a variety of public and private parties throughout the 1850s and '60s. Several industries and institutions within Douglas and on its perimeter provided a substantial economic base for the growth of the area. At 26th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue was the American Car Works (later the Illinois Central Railroad Car Shops), established in 1851. Farther west on 26th Street at Calumet Avenue was Mercy Hospital which took over the former St. Agatha Academy Building in 1863. Several breweries, the most prominent of which was owned by Conrad Seipp, were located along the lakefront.

Within Douglas, at 29th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue, was John B. Sherman's stockyard. Sherman's operation was the successor to that started in 1837 by W.F. Myrick, the proprietor of a tavern that was a popular stopover for cattle drovers and who was also a large landholder in the areas which are now the Near South Side and Douglas. Sherman's stockyard was also the forerunner of the Union Stock Yard and Transit Company which he was instrumental in founding in Bridgeport in 1865 as a means for consolidating the operations of the numerous livestock firms throughout the city.

Immediately adjacent to present-day Douglas on the southeast was Cleaverville, a 100-acre tract developed by soap and candle manufacturer John Cleaver. In 1851, Cleaver moved his factory from the neighborhood of Canal and Madison streets to the south lakefront site bounded by 38th Street, Ellis Avenue, and Oakwood Boulevard. Within his development, Cleaver also set aside land for plant workers' housing.

The extensive industry along the eastern and southern edges of Douglas was supported by a large working class that populated adjacent areas. Tracts of small frame houses were built by developers for sale or rental to the employees of nearby plants. Residential settlement by these workers in turn prompted the establishment of public transportation to the area and the founding of local institutions. In 1859, a horsecar line was inaugurated along Cottage Grove Avenue between downtown and 35th Street. The American Car Works was the impetus for the establishment of the South Congregational Church (1853) at 26th Street and Calumet Avenue, and St. James Roman Catholic Church (1855) at Wabash Avenue and 29th Street. Improvements and institutions such as these not only supported the community then in place but encouraged further growth.

Development activities in Douglas were also affected by the expansion of the city away from its frontier-era boundaries around old Fort Dearborn. As the city-wide population grew from 4,500 in 1840 to 30,000 in 1850, settlement away from what became downtown Chicago was inevitable. The annexation of the district between 22nd and 31st streets to the City of Chicago in 1851 validated this pattern and pointed toward the intensive settlement of this district that occurred during the following two decades. Despite its proximity to built-up areas, the character of Douglas south of 31st Street and west of

South Park Avenue (now King Drive) was predominantly rural. The vicinity was all wide open prairie and the only structures on the landscape were the large frame houses sited on the multi-acre parcels dispersed throughout the area. Subdivision of the land south to 39th Street during the 1850s and '60s, however, anticipated further urban expansion.

The pastoral quality of central Douglas was altered with the establishment of a prison camp there during the Civil War. In 1861, the Northern Military District of Illinois decided to locate a recruitment and training center at Chicago, and a portion of the land owned by Stephen Douglas' estate was selected for its site. The grounds, named Camp Douglas in honor of the late senator, were located between 31st Street, Cottage Grove Avenue, 33rd Street, and Forest Avenue (now Giles Avenue). Within a few months of its establishment, the camp was converted into a prison for captured Confederate soldiers. Housing more than 30,000 men during its three-year existence, the camp gained an infamous reputation for the squalid conditions produced by overcrowding.

Another Civil War-era institution was the Soldiers' Home, founded in 1864 at 35th Street and the Illinois Central tracks. Founded to care for Union soldiers enroute between field assignments, and injured soldiers after the war, the structure was sold to the St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum in 1871. The building (with additions) still stands, now housing the St. Joseph's Carondolet Child Care Center.

Camp Douglas was closed at the end of 1865, and attention turned to the ensuing redevelopment of the property. An article from the *Chicago Times* for May 8, 1866 reported the following:

> This subdivision of the city, though perhaps better adapted for villa residences on account of the beautiful groves which surround it and the elevated and undulating nature of the ground, has hitherto been held back in its progress by the vicinity of Camp Douglas and the stockyards. Now that these obstacles are removed and the Douglas estate has been divided up into suitable residential lots, its character will soon change, and in place of a straggling settlement of lager beer saloons will arise a charming suburban village. Instead of unsightly beer-gardens will spring up beautiful pleasure-grounds, summer-houses and garden.

Continued expansion of the city, as evidenced by the annexation of the region between 31st and 39th streets in 1863, further fueled the redevelopment campaign in Douglas. According to the *Times* article, over forty houses had already been constructed on the former camp grounds. The quality of the few remaining frame dwellings from this era indicates a decidedly more middle-class development that contrasted with the working-class districts farther east and west.

The pace of construction slowed during the 1870s, possibly from the focus on the rebuilding of the downtown and other districts following the Great Fire of 1871. Another, more considerable, impediment to building in general was the stock market crash of 1873

and the subsequent national depression. It was only with the gradual recovery of the real estate market in the last part of the decade that interest in Douglas was renewed.

Development of the area continued to promote the middle-class identity that had been initiated with the post-Camp Douglas improvements. A notable distinction between the homes of the late 1860s and those ten years later was the construction of the later homes in masonry rather than wood. In the aftermath of the 1871 fire, the City Council enacted an ordinance prohibiting the construction of frame structures within prescribed limits. On the south these fire limits extended to 39th Street. Also different with the newer construction was the prevalence of row-housing versus the free-standing dwellings of the previous era. As land values increased, developers resubdivided large sections of Douglas into standard twenty-five foot lots. Despite their narrow dimensions, the homes were elaborately detailed, bespeaking the affluence of their owners.

During the course of the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, the area from 31st to 39th Street between South Park Avenue and Michigan Boulevard evolved into a cohesive, distinctly urban enclave for upper-income residents. Chicago's growing economy during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, based largely on manufacturing and mercantile trade, produced a greatly expanded professional and upper-income class that supported the development of such exclusive neighborhoods as Douglas. The community included a number of the city's wealthiest and most prominent individuals, most of whom lived along Michigan Boulevard, but the majority of area residents came from the increasing ranks of professionals, self-proclaimed capitalists, and executives of a variety of business enterprises. While not remembered individually in the manner of Philip Armour, Cyrus McCormick, or Potter Palmer, most of the residents of Douglas -- particularly those who lived on Calumet, Prairie, and Forest avenues -- represented an elite class whose profits from businesses fueled Chicago's economic growth and enabled them to build fine homes.

Architectural Characteristics of the Calumet-Giles-Prairie District

Surviving homes along Calumet, Giles, and Prairie avenues between 31st and 35th streets are representative of the affluent character of the larger Douglas community as it matured during the 1880s and '90s. Distinct for their antiquity and architectural detailing, the houses are also significant for their associations with the successful merchants and professionals who lived in them. The product of this union of socio-economic and architectural circumstances was a decidedly urbane enclave whose identity remains despite the deterioration that has taken its toll over the last fifty years.

Residents within the Calumet-Giles-Prairie District had a broad range of business interests. Samuel Steele (3123 South Calumet; house built in 1890) and Isaac Wedeles (3127 South Calumet; house built in 1890) were partners in a wholesale grocery business. Farther south on Calumet Avenue, at number 3211, was the home of John Orb, president of the Conrad Seipp Brewing Company. The house had originally been built for a Mr.

Walker in 1891 from plans drawn up by architect L.B. Dixon. Maurice Rosenfeld, who served on the building committee for Michael Reese Hospital and who was a member of the Cook County Board of Commissioners from 1900 to 1902, lived at 3405 Calumet in a house built around 1892. Mortgage banker Martin Barbe lived at 3157 Prairie Avenue in a house (demolished) designed by architects Adler and Sullivan and built in 1884. In 1889, Barbe commissioned Joseph Thain to design the double house still standing at 3151-53 Prairie. Another prominent area resident, who lived at 3348 Prairie, was Myer Lebolt who established Lebolt and Company Jewelers in 1899. The economic prosperity enjoyed by these and other businessmen brought them and their families a new-found social status that was most emphatically demonstrated by the architectural treatment of their homes.

The historic district is composed almost exclusively of late nineteenth-century residences exhibiting the gamut of architectural treatments, from the simply detailed frame workmen's cottages of the pre-Fire period to the elaborate masonry structures of the 1880s and '90s-era elite. Many of the houses were designed by the leading architects of the period whose work was consistent with -- indeed, often pioneering in -- the architectural esthetics of the time. The evolution of stylistic treatments as seen in these homes illustrate the response of the architecture profession to larger societal changes.

The oldest homes in the district date from the mid-1860s and early '70s. For the most part, they are simple, one-and-a-half-story clapboard-sided structures with Italianate detailing, such as dentiled cornices or thick-profiled, arched hoods over windows and doors. Until recently, the best surviving example of this type within the district was located at 3120 Prairie Avenue; however, the house was razed in early 1985. Adjacent to the site, at 3112, is a more elaborate version of the type, moderately altered by a veneer of asphalt siding. Judging from its size and its somewhat more ornate treatment, the house probably typifies those that were built by the more middle-class population that moved to the area following the closing of Camp Douglas. The few remaining examples of the early working-class dwellings in the area still stand on Prairie Avenue, although the character of their original design has been diminished by newer siding. Homes of this era are extremely rare, the loss of others like them in the area having been due to extended periods of neglect and deterioration resulting from the limited economic means of many residents from the 1930s.

By the time settlement in Douglas was renewed in the late 1870s, much of the character of Chicago had been transformed. No longer a fledgling city, Chicago had taken on a distinctly urban identity, bolstered by its thriving and varied economy. Land was a commodity no different than others, and when its value climbed consumers modified their use of it. Consequently, real estate investors began to subdivide residential blocks into regular parcels, averaging twenty-five feet in width. For the architectural profession, such a change, along with the increasing number of residential clients (as opposed to commercial patrons) resulting from this economic prosperity, required architects to place a new emphasis on residential design. Further, these circumstances also forced architects to alter the scale and nature of house designs from the large, free-standing dwellings that previously dominated their residential work to more compact, though equally elaborate, com-

positions for attached residences.

Coinciding with these modifications to residential design was a redefinition of architectural esthetics, in which there was a movement away from literal depictions of historical architecture, as seen in a variety of revival styles, toward more abstract interpretations of traditional design. Architects began to adapt the forms and details of a myriad of periods and cultures: Classical Greece, sixth-century Byzantium, the Romanesque of twelfth-century France, fourteenth-century English Gothic, the architecture of fifteenth-century Italian palaces, and others. Although these styles, chosen for their picturesque qualities, were based on historical precedent, the abstract manner of their use was a turning point in the development of modern architecture.

The majority of structures within the district are of Romanesque and Queen Anne design. Rock-faced wall surfaces, with minimal ornamentation and punctuated by simple door and window openings, characterize the former, while asymmetrical compositions, generally of red pressed brick, with various projections such as window bays and irregular rooflines typify the Queen Anne style. Homes at 3126 Calumet Avenue (William Russell, original owner; F. B. Townsend, architect; 1884); 3404-06 Giles Avenue (N.M. Wolft, original owner; Frederick Alschlager, architect; 1887-88); 3411-13 Giles (Frank Burley, original owner; 1894); and 3437-39-41 Prairie Avenue (H. Krick, original owner; William Strippleman, architect; 1885) illustrate the varieties of Queen Anne design present within the district. Examples of Romanesque design include the dwellings at 3369 Calumet (H. Fleming, original owner; William H. Drake, architect; 1889); 3307 Giles; and 3132 Prairie (Ira Heath, original owner; 1889). The design of the Heath House is often attributed to the architectural firm of Adler and Sullivan. While the firm did draw preliminary plans for a house for Heath and notice of the commission was published in contemporary building journals, all indications are that Heath never built the house from Adler and Sullivan's plans, a fact which Frank Lloyd Wright, who was chief draftsman in Adler and Sullivan's office at the time, substantiated in 1936. The identity of the architect of the house is unknown.

Italianate designs are another prevalent style within the district. The style renders a strong vertical quality through the use of ground-to-roof bays into which are set tiers of long narrow windows. It employs bold detailing, generally in the form of large elaborate cornices and massive ornamental lintels over doors and windows. The structures, usually three to four stories tall with an English basement, are often of red brick with contrasting trim of buff limestone. Particularly good examples of the style are seen in the flat buildings at 3202-04-06-08 Prairie Avenue (W.A. Watkin, original owner; 1882) and 3136-38 Giles Avenue. Other fine examples are the single-family residences at 3156 Prairie (J.A. Beebe, original owner; 1876) and 3114-16 Giles.

A variation on the Italianate style was the Neo-Grec which though similar to Italianate in scale and proportion, differs from it in subtle details. In contrast to the Italianate, Neo-Grec styling is more angular, especially in terms of rectangular door and window openings. Its most distinguishing characteristic is its incised ornament. Striations were used to rein-

force the overall rectangular proportions. Several residences demonstrate the style, most notably those at 3144-46-48 Calumet (Curran and Wolff, original owners; 1881); 3305-07-09-11-13 Calumet (J.D. McCauley, original owner; 1882-83) and 3339-41-43 Giles Avenue.

Other styles are represented to lesser degrees within the district, but many buildings are more eclectic in their design, blending a variety of historical references into a single composition. The steeply pitched gables and massive stone window enframements of the rowhouses at 3415-17-19-21-23 Giles (Frank Burley, original owner; 1894-95) are characteristic of the Tudor style adapted from English architecture of the seventeenth century. The structure at 3138 Calumet juxtaposes its red brick facing with contrasting bands of buff-colored stone in a manner consistent with Victorian Gothic design, but its steeply sloped mansard roof is an aspect of French Second Empire styling. The same polychromy on 3138 Calumet is seen on the attached flat buildings at 3113-15 Giles but blended with Italianate features rather than French. Chateauesque architecture, derived from sixteenth-century France, is merged with Romanesque design in the house at 3322 Calumet Avenue. Queen Anne and Frence Renaissance styling, in the form of the projecting oriel and scalloped roofline on the structure at 3132 Calumet, modify its otherwise Romanesque character.

Speculative real estate development was pervasive throughout Douglas and many of the buildings, single-family residences as well as flats, were built as rental property. Stylistically, there was little difference between individually commissioned dwellings and those built as income property. The group of attached residences, including both single-family and flat dwellings, at 3410 through 3436 Calumet (portions demolished), built in 1895-96 by developers Burley and Buckingham, are indistinguishable from homes throughout the district. They utilize the same mixture of architectural fashions seen on other neighborhood houses, grafting elements of French classical and English design onto the compositions. Larger six-flats, such as those at 3126-28 Giles (C.S. Barker, original owner; J.G. Simpson, architect; 1898); 3432-34 Giles (George F. Harding, original owner; John P. Heninger, architect; 1899-1900); and 3250-52 Prairie (Edward I. Bloom, original owner; Andrew Sandegren, architect; 1906) were more formal in their design. Their sources were often French classical or, as in the case of 3250-52 Prairie, Georgian, the principal decorative embellishment of the compositions being focused on their doorways and rooflines. Although commercial businesses were largely confined to 35th Street and State Street, the character of their designs respected that of the residential sections, as illustrated in the classically detailed commercial-residential building at 3455 Prairie.

The uniformity of building design in Douglas is a product in part of the major development of the area over a limited, twenty-year period, but the overall quality of architectural expression is due primarily to the caliber of the architects employed. A number of the most prominent architects in the city, whose collective work was vital to the commercial and residential development of Chicago during the late nineteenth century, designed distinctive houses in the area. Works by architects Wheelock & Clay, William Le Baron Jenney, Frost & Granger, Solon S. Beman, and Beers, Clay & Dutton were built through-

out the larger Douglas community and are still standing. John Root, in partnership with Daniel Burnham, designed numerous homes of varying architectural scale and style in the area, most of which have been demolished. Just outside of the historic district, at 3350 Indiana, is the home designed by Burnham & Root for C. Edward Baker in 1881. Larger houses by the firm lined Michigan Avenue, the one for livestock investor Sidney A. Kent outside the district at 2944 Michigan (1882-83)being especially notable.

Another distinguished firm whose work in Douglas was extensive was that of Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan. On the basis of Adler's strong ties in the Jewish community, a large portion of which populated Douglas, the architects were called on to design more than twenty residences in the vicinity as well as the Kehilath Anshe Ma'ariv Synagogue (1890-91; now Pilgrim Baptist Church; designated a Chicago Landmark in 1981) at 3301 South Indiana Avenue. Prior to the fame they gained for their successful completion of the Auditorium Building (430 South Michigan Avenue; 1886-90; designated a Chicago Landmark in 1976), residential commissions, especially those for residences in Douglas, were a mainstay of their practice. As such, these were signal buildings in the development of the distinctive design philosophy of that firm. Of the numerous houses built in and around the neighborhood, only one, that for furniture manufacturer Joseph Deimel, at 3141 Calumet (1886-87), survives. Unfortunately, alterations to the house detract from its original character. Remodellings insensitive to the historic qualties of the original design have had a similarly negative effect on the row houses built for Robert W. Roloson at 3213-15-17-19 Calumet (designated a Chicago Landmark in 1979), designed by Sullivan's protege Frank Lloyd Wright in 1893-94. In the case of both structures, their association with these internationally famous architects transcends the negative impact of subsequent alterations.

Other, lesser known, architects lived in and designed a number of area houses. Among the most prolific was Joseph Thain, who lived in one of the units of the double house he built at 3152-54 Prairie in 1885. Thain was also the architect for the previously mentioned double house for Martin Barbe across the street at 3151-53 Prairie (1889), as well as for several homes outside of the historic district in the 3600-block of King Drive (formerly Grand Boulevard). Architect L.B. Dixon designed the previously cited Walker Residence at 3211 Calumet (1891) and the Joseph Biefeld Residence (1887), 3308 Calumet. He also prepared plans for other structures in the vicinity including some of the larger Michigan Avenue homes, such as 3433 (Moses Born, original owner; 1885) and 3663 (Lipman Glick, original owner; 1889), and for the Lakeside Club (1886) at 3140 Indiana. Dixon lived in the 3100-block of Calumet Avenue in a house demolished for the Douglas Elementary School. The original owner of the dwelling at 3316 Calumet (ca. 1884) was George Edbrooke, a well known architect of his day who, in addition to designing this house, was probably the architect of a very similar structure at 3132 Calumet which was presumably built around the same time. Edbrooke's brother, Willoughby, in partnership with Franklin Burnham, designed the flat building at 3137-39 Giles (1885-86) for George Cole. While some of these architects are forgotten in the annals of mainstream architectural history, they were among the leading practitioners of their profession, and their competent designs for numerous buildings contributed significantly to the development of individual

neighborhoods and the city as a whole.

The most notable attribute of the Calumet-Giles-Prairie District is the diversity of stylistic expression that exists within a uniform architectural context. The qualities of individual design are considerable, but they are visually subordinate to the broader architectural considerations of scale, materials, and continuity of detailing. Narrow building proportions and two- to four-story building heights, as well as distinctive period styling and the predominant use of masonry, are features that promote the appreciation of the ensemble more than of any one particular house. Further, the architectural character of the group complements the physical configuration of the street grid in the district, which is organized in long narrow blocks with a decided north-south orientation. Despite the number of demolitions that has occurred in these blocks subsequently, the remaining structures collectively convey the sense of the nineteenth-century neighborhood streetscapes. Hopefully, future infill development will take its inspiration from these designs, allowing new construction to enhance and become part of the historic fabric of the neighborhood.

1890 to 1930: A Community in Transition

While the physical and socio-economic characteristics of the historic district were similar to those of the larger Douglas community, there were also distinctive differences among sections within the community. The area between 31st and 35th streets, from Michigan Avenue to the lake, evolved in a manner consistent with the district. South of 35th Street, however, Grand Boulevard, which was the southward extension of South Park Avenue, established an identity independent of the streets immediately east or west of it. The boulevard, which stretches between 35th Street and the northern edge of Washington Park at 51st Street, was proposed by the South Parks Commissioners in 1869. The scheme developed by prominent landscape architect H.W.S. Cleveland called for the widening of South Park to 200 feet south of 35th Street and the installation of two landscaped parkways along both sides of the roadway. Approval of the plan was quick and construction was completed by the summer of 1870. Despite the sparsity of residential settlement along it through the early 1880s, the parkway was very popular as a promenade along which individuals and couples could walk or drive carriages as recreational pastimes. By the mid '90s, real estate developments in the neighborhoods surrounding it prompted construction of homes on the boulevard, the residents of which could afford more expensive houses than could individuals on the streets adjoining Grand Boulevard.

A similar axial evolution marked Michigan Avenue as the range of addresses of prominent residents during the early 1890s extended continuously from 12th Street (now Roosevelt Road) to the 4400-block. Its residents were the most prominent in the city, rivaling only those of Prairie Avenue, in the vicinity of 18th Street, for prestige. In a trend distinct from the rest of Douglas, large free-standing dwellings were built along the thoroughfare, their physical size and opulence reinforcing the social and economic status of residents. The streets flanking Michigan, Indiana and Wabash avenues, were somewhat transitional in their character, intermingling large dwellings with smaller, attached houses

like those found throughout most of the rest of the community.

Commercial developments marked a further distinction in the character of land use within the community. The steady establishment of public transportation routes not only facilitated movement between Douglas and other areas, especially the downtown, but it also promoted mercantile development of these thoroughfares. In 1869, small steam locomotives, or dummies, began running along State Street as far as 31st Street; in 1881, horsecars extended the line to 55th Street. A 35th Street horsecar was inaugurated in 1887 between Archer Avenue and State Street, and was extended eastward to Michigan Avenue in 1892 and to Cottage Grove in 1898. Service along 31st Street between Lake Park and Archer avenues was begun in 1884. Pershing Road (then Egan Avenue and later 39th Street) received horsecar service from Cottage Grove to State Street beginning in 1875. Various route extensions and equipment improvements were reciprocated in the growth of mercantile trade along these streets. By the 1890s, separate shopping districts along 31st, 35th, 39th, and State streets had emerged in response to the comprehensive settlement of the community.

Ethnic identification was not as strong a factor in the community as were social and economic distinctions. An upper-income class of Irish, Jewish, German, English and other individuals of western European origin populated the neighborhood. Ethnicity was reflected in some of the neighborhood institutions. In 1891, the Jewish Kehilath Anshe Ma'ariv (Congregation of the Men of the West) moved from the former church it had occupied since the 1870s at 26th Street and Indiana to a new synagogue at 33rd and Indiana. Another Jewish institution, although non-sectarian in its service, was Michael Reese Hospital at 29th and Cottage Grove Avenue, which was founded by the heirs of Michael Reese using a portion of his estate. Irish-Catholics opened De La Salle Institute at the northeast corner of 35th Street and Wabash Avenue. Movement of a portion of the Protestant elite away from the area that would become the Loop was documented by the erection of the First Baptist Church of Chicago at 31st Street and South Park in 1876. Farther west, at Federal Street between 32nd and 33rd streets, meatpacking magnate Philip Armour donated money for the founding of the Armour Institute, a technical college, in 1891. Taken together, these and a variety of other religious and social institutions reinforced the identity of Douglas at the turn of the century.

Throughout its development as a white, middle- to upper-class residential area, the Douglas community co-existed with Chicago's sizeable black community, located immediately to the west between Dearborn and Federal streets. During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the largest part of Chicago's black population occupied a long narrow district bounded generally by State Street and Wentworth Avenue from 12th Street to Pershing Road. Known as the "Black Belt," it paralleled the affluent white settlements just east of State Street in Douglas. The two groups, while living in geographic proximity, remained isolated from each other by strict racial and class mores of the period.

By the first decade of this century, the growing black population to the west and the

encroachment of light industry, particularly in the vicinity of 26th Street and Michigan Avenue, and also 39th and Prairie, began to diminish the prestige of the area, and upper-income whites began moving farther south along Grand Boulevard. As white families vacated houses, they were bought or leased by black families in a pattern that accelerated during the 1910s. From 1910 to 1920, the population of blacks increased dramatically in Chicago as a result of the Great Migration of southern blacks to northern industrial cities to fill the large number of jobs produced by the booming World War I economy. By 1920, blacks occupied virtually all of Douglas west of Cottage Grove Avenue.

While the racial make-up of the community changed, its identity as an exclusive residential district was maintained as its nineteenth-century housing stock was occupied in large part by the prominent black businessmen and professionals of the city. Notable residents within the historic district included Adelbert Roberts, the first black state senator in Illinois, at 3405 Calumet Avenue, and Allen Alexander Wesley who lived at 3149 Prairie. Wesley, a surgeon, was one of the founders of Provident Hospital at 36th Street and Dearborn in 1891. A number of other middle-class individuals, drawn from a broad range of businesses and professions, populated the area, maintaining the social and economic prestige of the area within a changed racial context.

Complementing the new population of Douglas was a dynamic black-financed commercial development focused at the intersection of 35th and State streets. Beginning around 1905, Jesse Binga and other blacks began to develop local black-owned businesses and commercial real estate in response to the unwillingness of the traditional, downtown, white investment community to finance the commercial needs of Douglas residents. Concurrent with the growth of this black business district was the evolution of an important entertainment center for jazz music. Louis Armstrong, Joseph "King" Oliver, Bessie Smith and "Jelly Roll" Morton were among the musicians who played regularly in a variety of area clubs such as the Sunset Cafe at 35th and Calumet, Dreamland in the 3600-block of South State Street, and the Royal Gardens at 31st and Cottage Grove Avenue. Contemporarily referred to as "the Metropolis," the area was a prosperous commercial and entertainment center during the first quarter of this century.

1930 to the Present

By the late 1920s, the rapid economic growth of Chicago's black community that had marked the previous decade had slowed significantly as jobs became scarce. Compounding this adverse circumstance was the sustained influx of southern blacks. The ensuing financial devastation of the Great Depression of the 1930s hit the black community particularly hard and brought about the failure of many of the businesses and institutions that had been an integral part of its financial and social base. In this period, much of the Douglas housing stock was converted, out of economic necessity, into apartments and rooming houses. As these nineteenth-century houses reached an age critical to their upkeep, money was not readily available to carry out necessary repairs and maintenance for many of them. The resulting deterioration of large numbers of individual homes inevitably led to

the decline of the fabric of the larger neighborhood.

Within a decade, the marked physical deterioration of area housing, together with the overcrowded and unsafe conditions of the hastily subdivided dwellings, caused officials to look upon these circumstances as a serious urban problem. Beginning in the mid-1930s, public and private initiatives were being proposed to eliminate the problems of substandard housing by the removal of entire blocks of older dwellings and replacement with new housing units and expanded institutional campuses. Demolition in the area bounded by South Park Way (as South Park Avenue and Grand Boulevard were renamed in the mid 1920s after South Park was widened to the same width as Grand Boulevard), Pershing Road, Cottage Grove, and 37th Street was begun to make way for the Ida B. Wells public housing project which opened in 1941.

Decisions by the newly formed Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) and Michael Reese Hospital to remain in the area complemented governmental actions. IIT was formed in 1940 by the merger of the Armour Institute with the Lewis Institute, a technical school founded on the Near West Side in 1896. Beginning in the late 1930s, the Armour Institute, and continuing through the '40s and '50s as IIT, carried out a comprehensive land clearance and redevelopment campaign in the area bounded by Federal Street and Michigan Avenue, 31st and 35th streets. Many of the new campus buildings were designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the internationally famous architect who was chairman of the school's department of architecture from 1938 to 1958. In 1946, IIT and Michael Reese Hospital formed the South Side Planning Board to represent their interests in future planning efforts in the community. The decision of Mercy Hospital to build a new facility on its original site further bolstered the institutional base of the changing neighborhood.

With the encouragement and support of the South Side Planning Board, the city of Chicago, through its federally funded Land Clearance Commission and the Chicago Housing Authority changed the face of the Douglas community by levelling hundreds of acres of mostly substandard housing and replacing these blocks with large-scale public and private housing. In 1958, the Prairie Avenue Court Apartments in the 3200-block of Prairie Avenue was opened, providing more than 300 units for senior citizens. That same year, Stateway Gardens, with more than 1600 units of public housing, was opened south of 35th Street along part of the old Federal Street slum within the old "Black Belt." The construction of the Prairie Avenue Courts between South Park Way and Prairie Avenue south of 26th Street took place throughout the early and mid 1950s, adding 500 more apartments. On the east side of Douglas, between 31st and 35th streets, east of South Park, the New York Life Insurance Company financed the construction of the 2,000-unit, middle-income Lake Meadows apartment complex, built in stages between 1953 and 1968. A comparable, privately financed project named Prairie Shores, located just north of Lake Meadows between 26th and 31st streets, was opened in 1962.

The effect of the large-scale redevelopment that has taken place over a fifty-year period has been dramatic on the physical characteristics of the area. The low-scale, evenly dispersed settlement patterns of the nineteenth-century have been replaced with nodes of

concentrated high-rise apartments and the broad, open landscaping of the IIT campus. Redevelopment campaigns, having taken place on the perimeter of the community, have ignored the traditional homes and streetscapes remaining in the center of the community. While this neglect saved the older dwellings, it has done nothing to promote the active preservation of these houses. Deterioration has continued to a degree, causing the demolition of individual structures and isolated groups, and disturbing the visual continuity of streetscapes. Recognizing the quality of the surviving housing stock, area residents have been rehabilitating their homes in growing numbers since 1970. Many of the single-family residences which were converted to apartments and rooming houses more than a half a century ago are now being restored to their original condition in terms of both use and architectural design, thus creating a picturesque and dynamic counterpoint to mid twentieth-century developments.

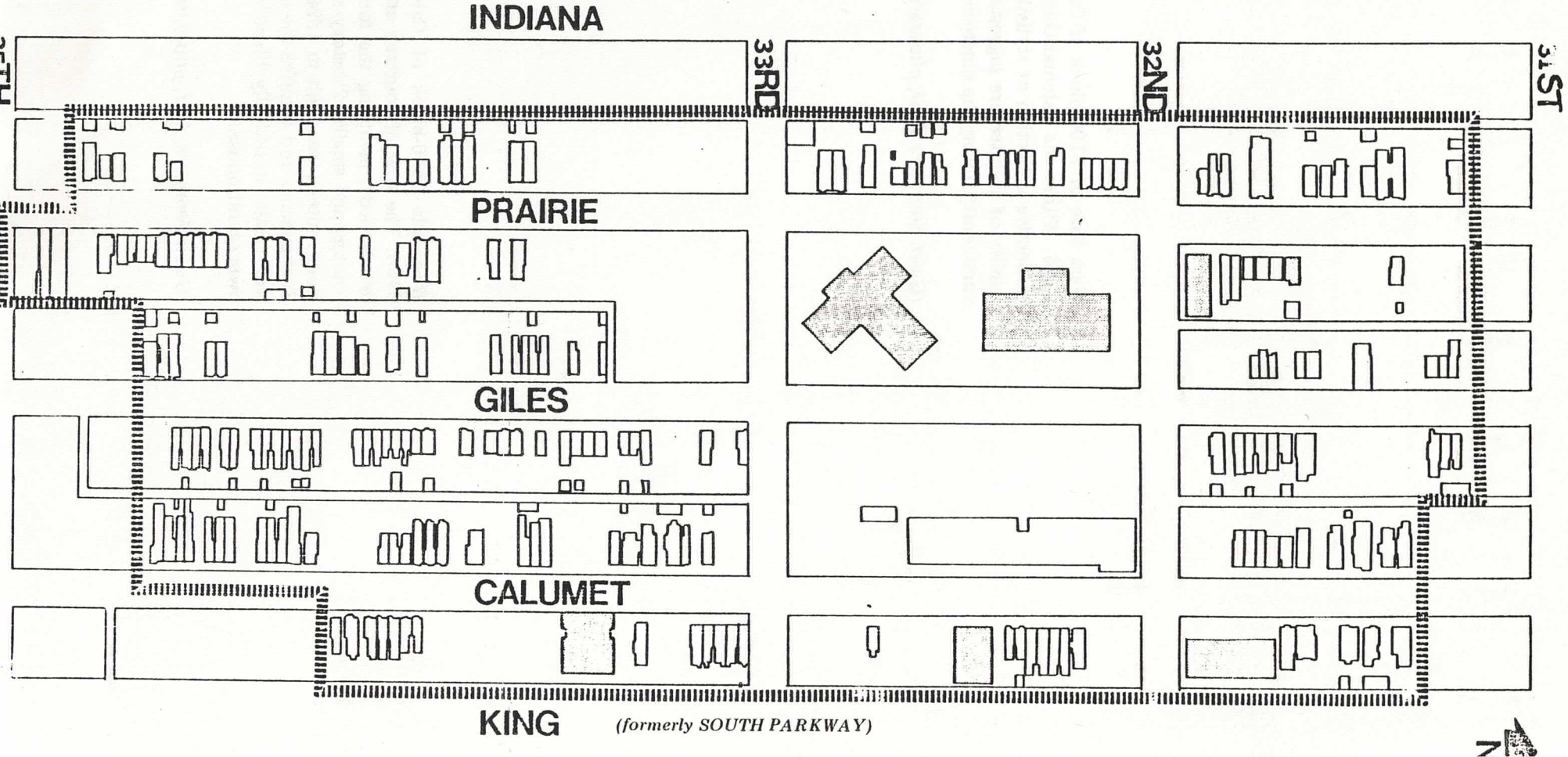
MAP OF PROPOSED BOUNDARIES FOR THE

CALUMET—GILES—PRAIRIE DISTRICT

Prepared by staff, Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks

PROPOSED BOUNDARIES

CONSTRUCTED AFTER 1940

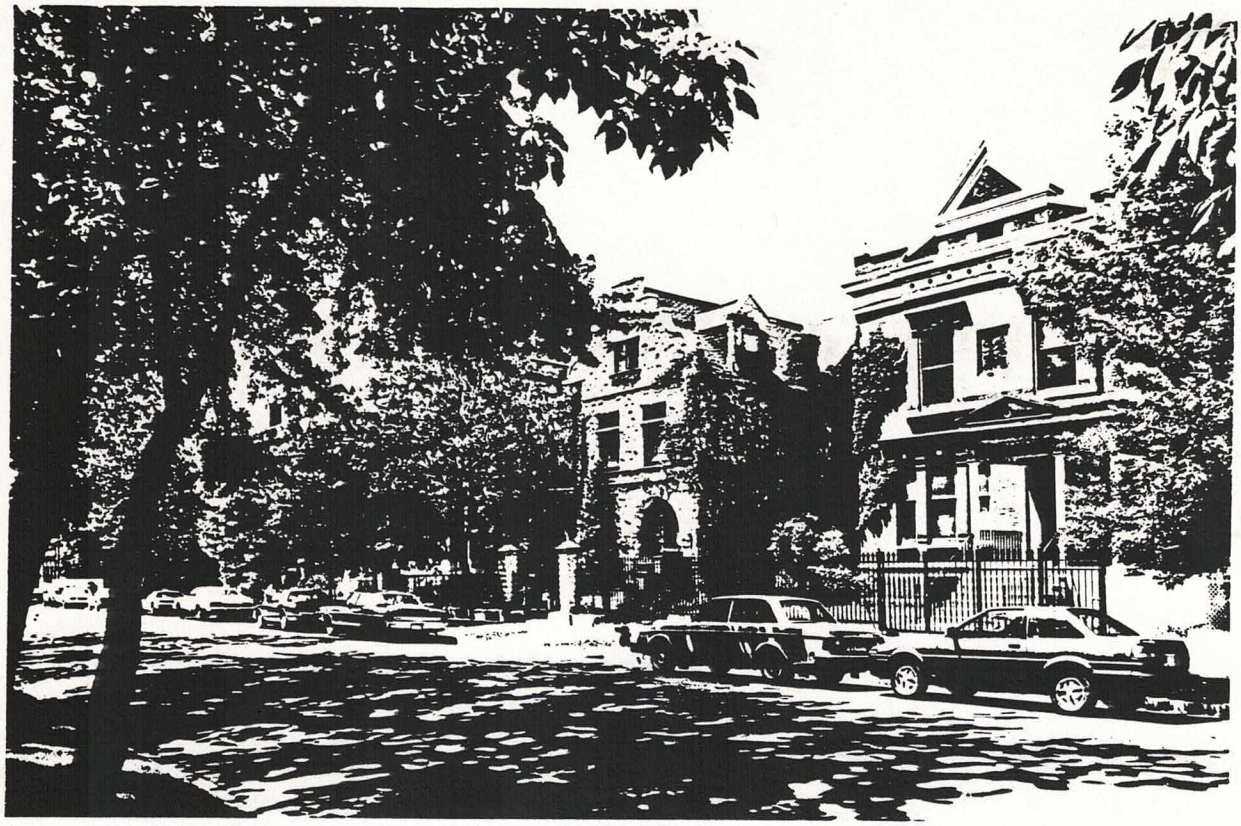


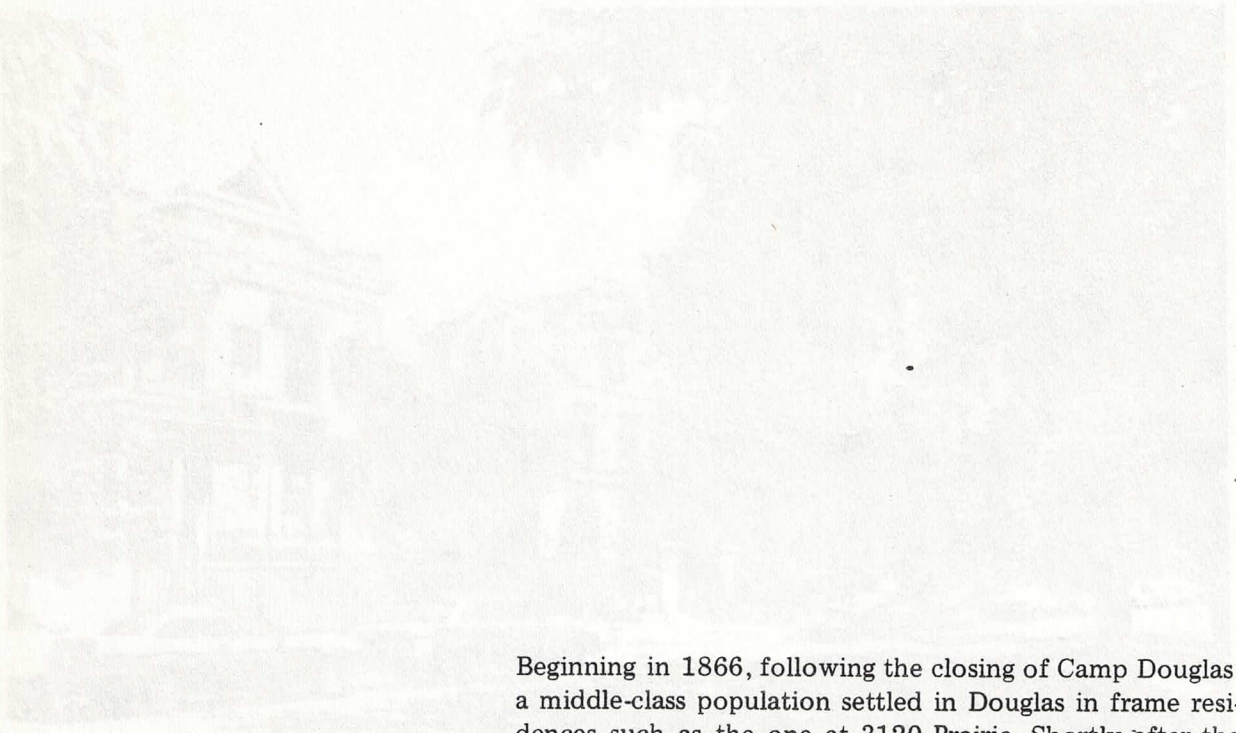
West Side of 3100-block of Calumet, looking south from 3126. Within the Calumet-Giles-Prairie District is found a distinctive collection of stylistically diverse homes, whose quality of architecture suggests the affluent origins of this community during the nineteenth century.

(Gwen Sommers Yant, photographer)

West side 3400-block of Calumet, looking south from 3408. The row of fourteen attached residences (portions demolished), including the four-story, brick flat building (center) and smaller 2½-story single-family residences (left from center), was built in 1896 by developers Burley and Buckingham, and typified the manner in which speculative real estate stylistically blended with the architecture of owner-built houses.

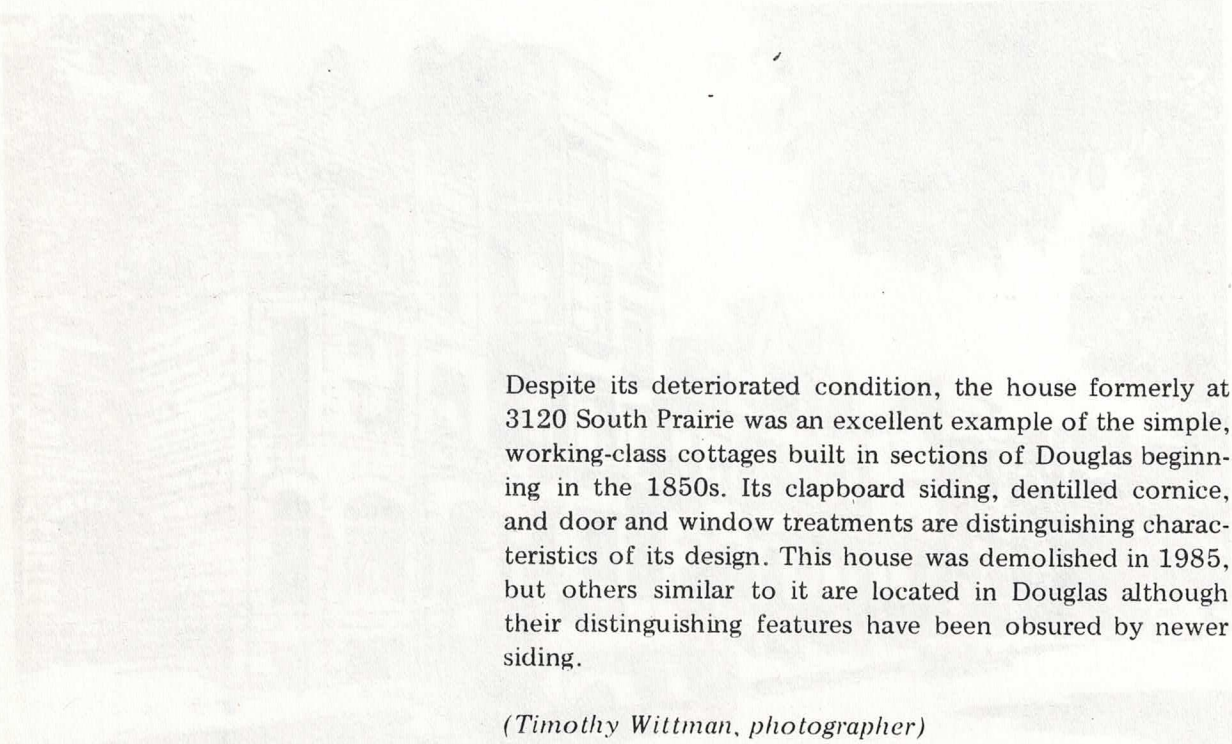
(Gwen Sommers Yant, photographer)





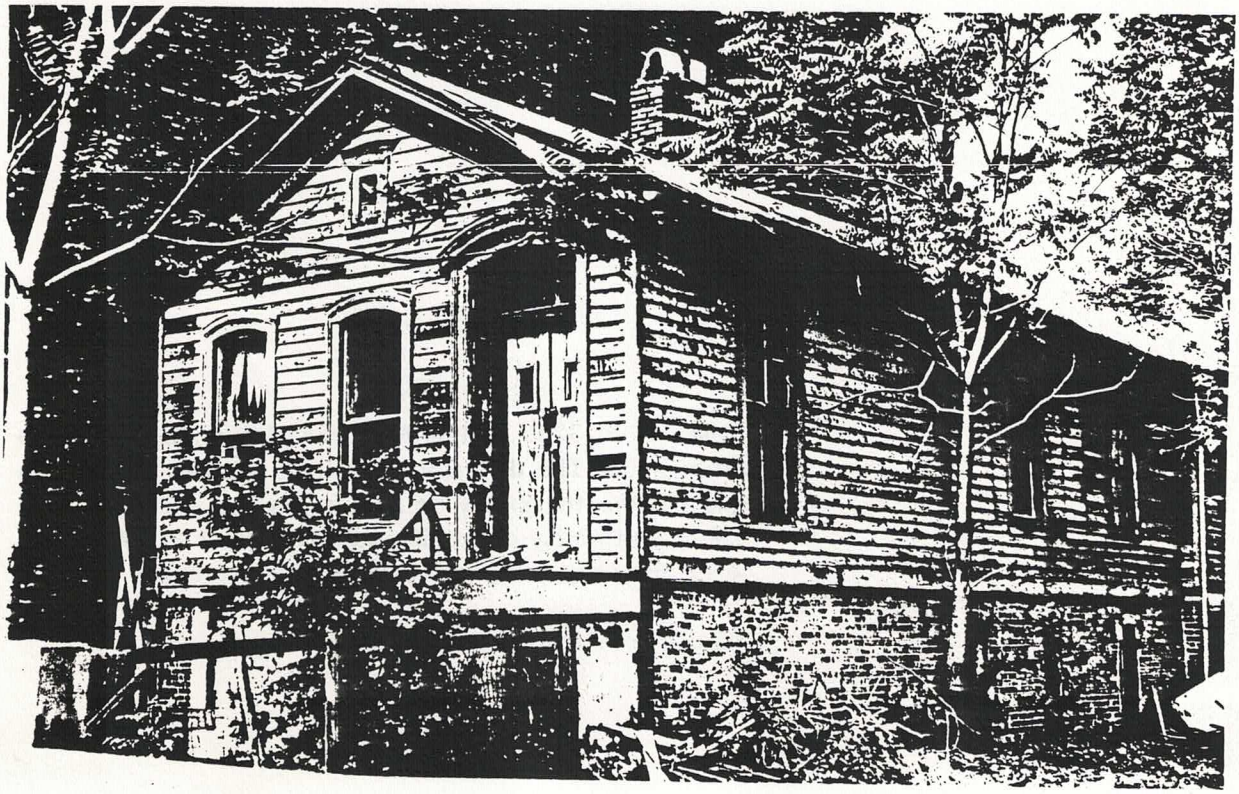
Beginning in 1866, following the closing of Camp Douglas, a middle-class population settled in Douglas in frame residences such as the one at 3120 Prairie. Shortly after the Chicago Fire of October 1871, the City Council enacted an ordinance prohibiting wood construction in the city north of 39th Street, thus influencing the subsequent construction of masonry structures in Douglas during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

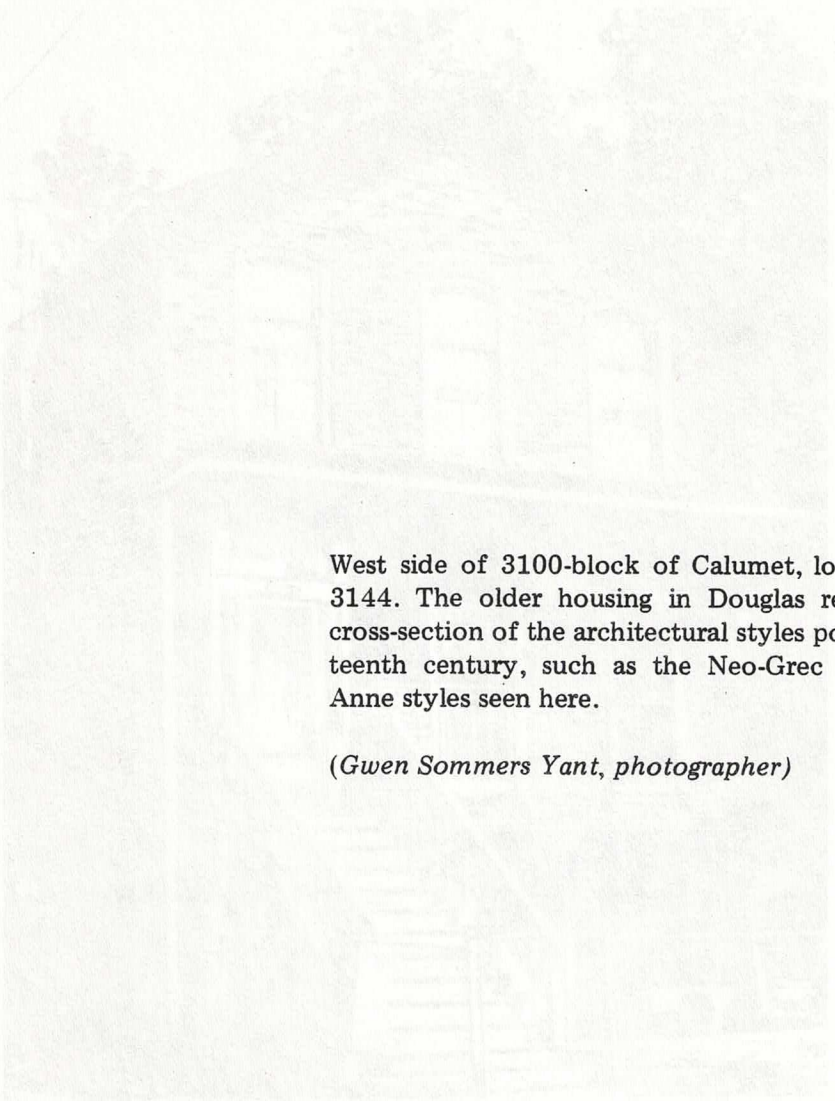
(Timothy Wittman, photographer)



Despite its deteriorated condition, the house formerly at 3120 South Prairie was an excellent example of the simple, working-class cottages built in sections of Douglas beginning in the 1850s. Its clapboard siding, dentilled cornice, and door and window treatments are distinguishing characteristics of its design. This house was demolished in 1985, but others similar to it are located in Douglas although their distinguishing features have been obsured by newer siding.

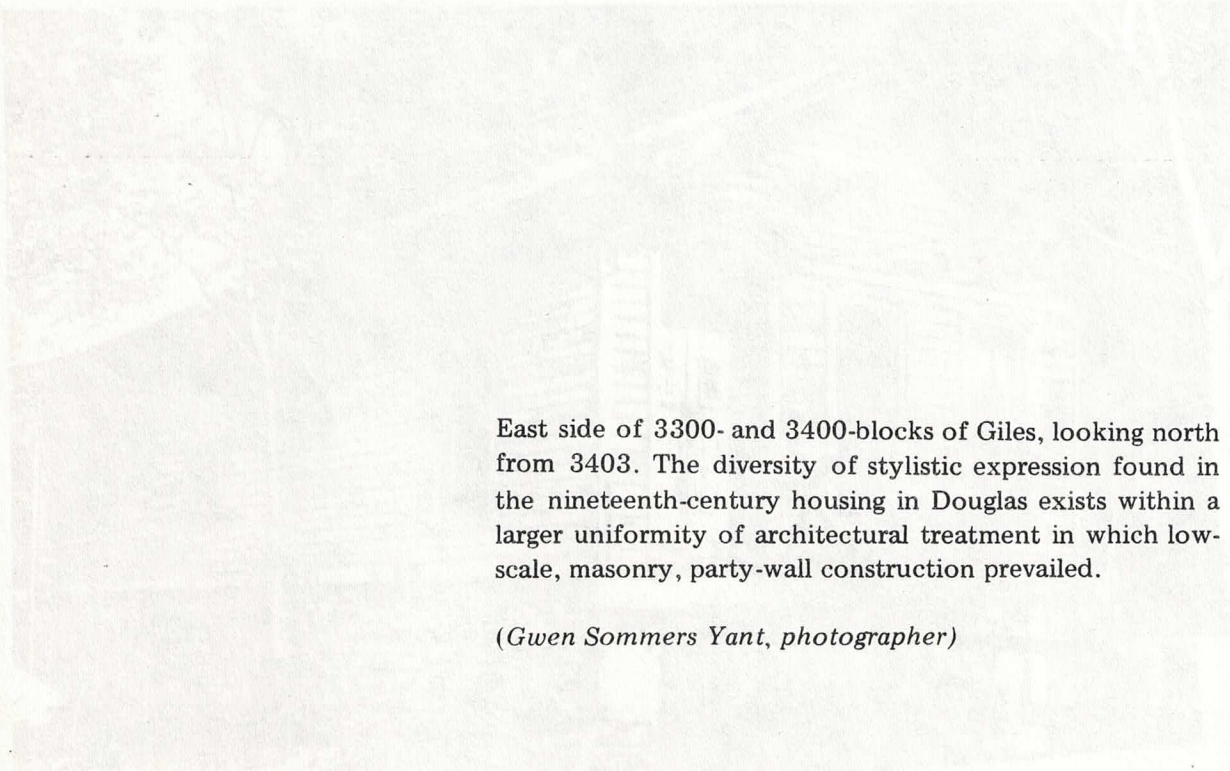
(Timothy Wittman, photographer)





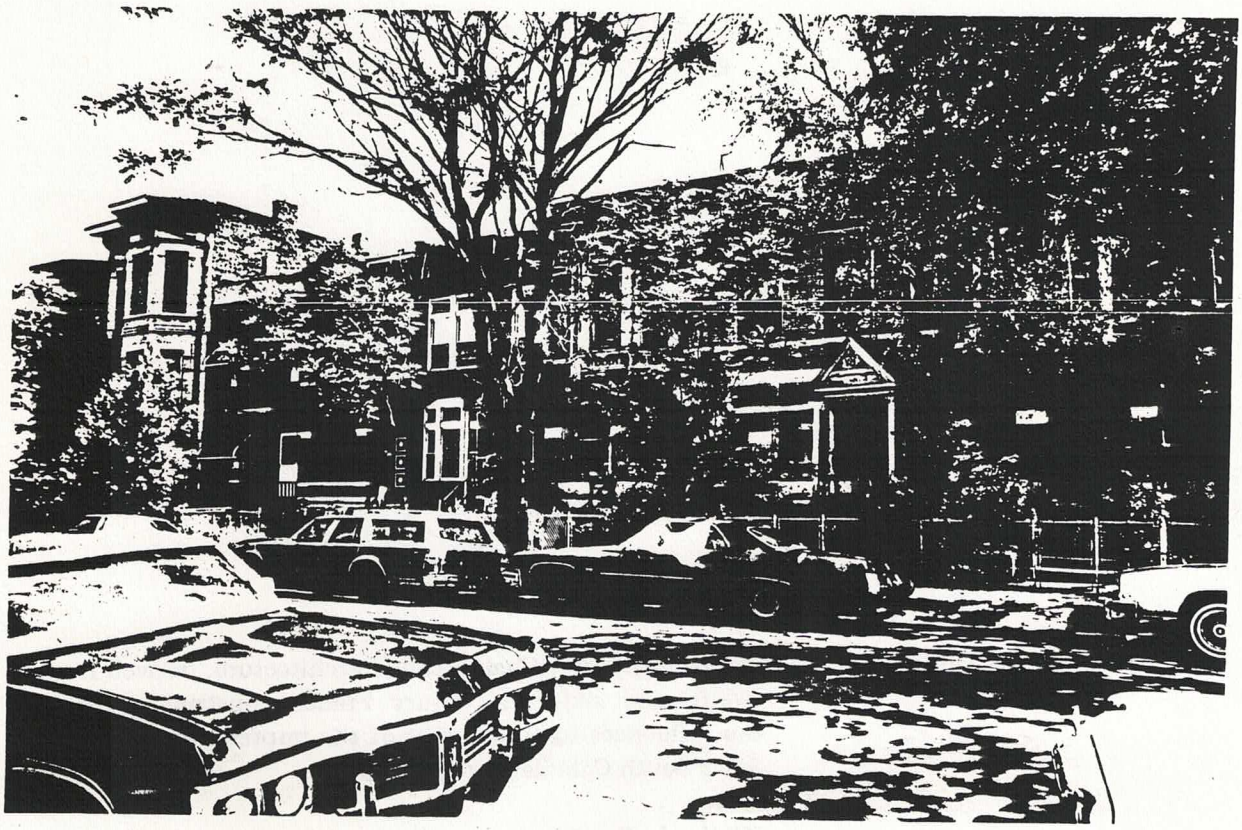
West side of 3100-block of Calumet, looking north from 3144. The older housing in Douglas represents a broad cross-section of the architectural styles popular in the nineteenth century, such as the Neo-Grec (left) and Queen Anne styles seen here.

(Gwen Sommers Yant, photographer)



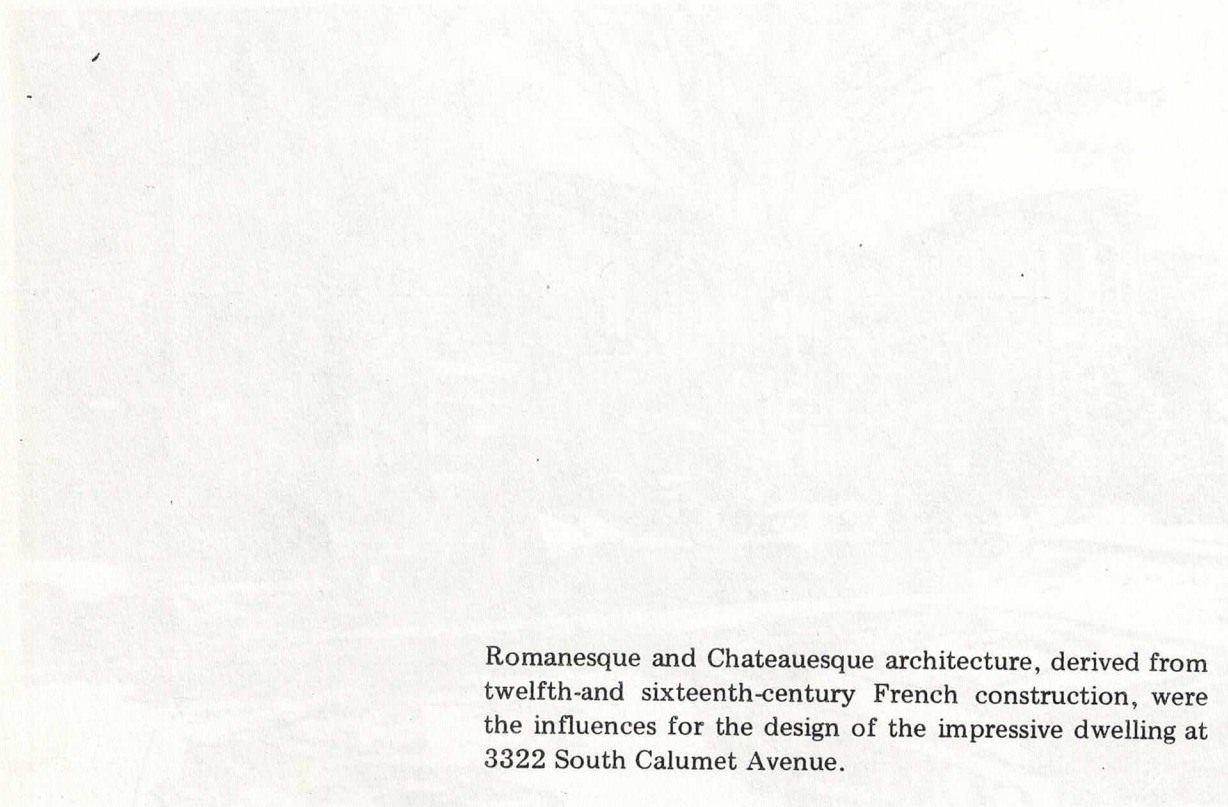
East side of 3300- and 3400-blocks of Giles, looking north from 3403. The diversity of stylistic expression found in the nineteenth-century housing in Douglas exists within a larger uniformity of architectural treatment in which low-scale, masonry, party-wall construction prevailed.

(Gwen Sommers Yant, photographer)



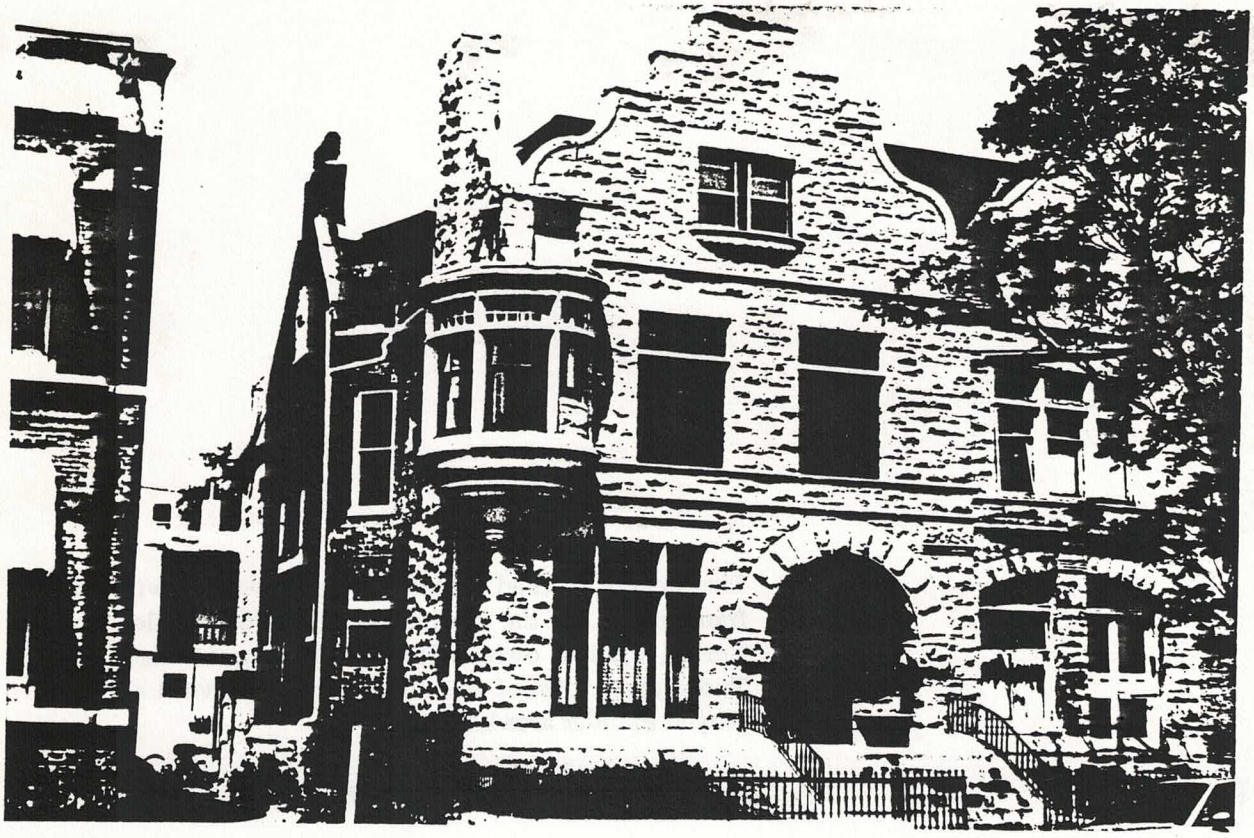
Architect George Edbrooke designed the house at 3316 Calumet Avenue, built around 1884, for himself. The combined French Renaissance and Romanesque style structure is duplicated by the house at 3132 Calumet.

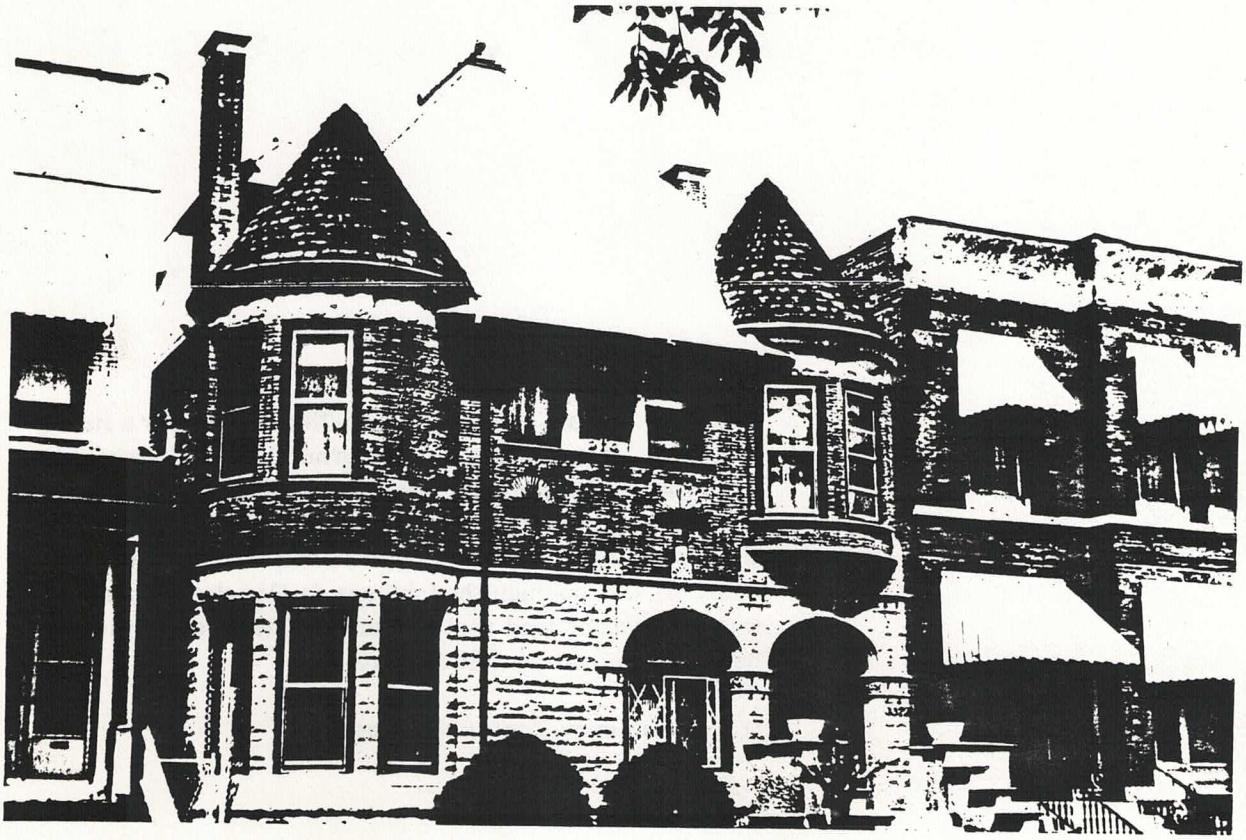
(Cathy L. Rocca, photographer)



Romanesque and Chateauesque architecture, derived from twelfth-and sixteenth-century French construction, were the influences for the design of the impressive dwelling at 3322 South Calumet Avenue.

(Cathy L. Rocca, photographer)



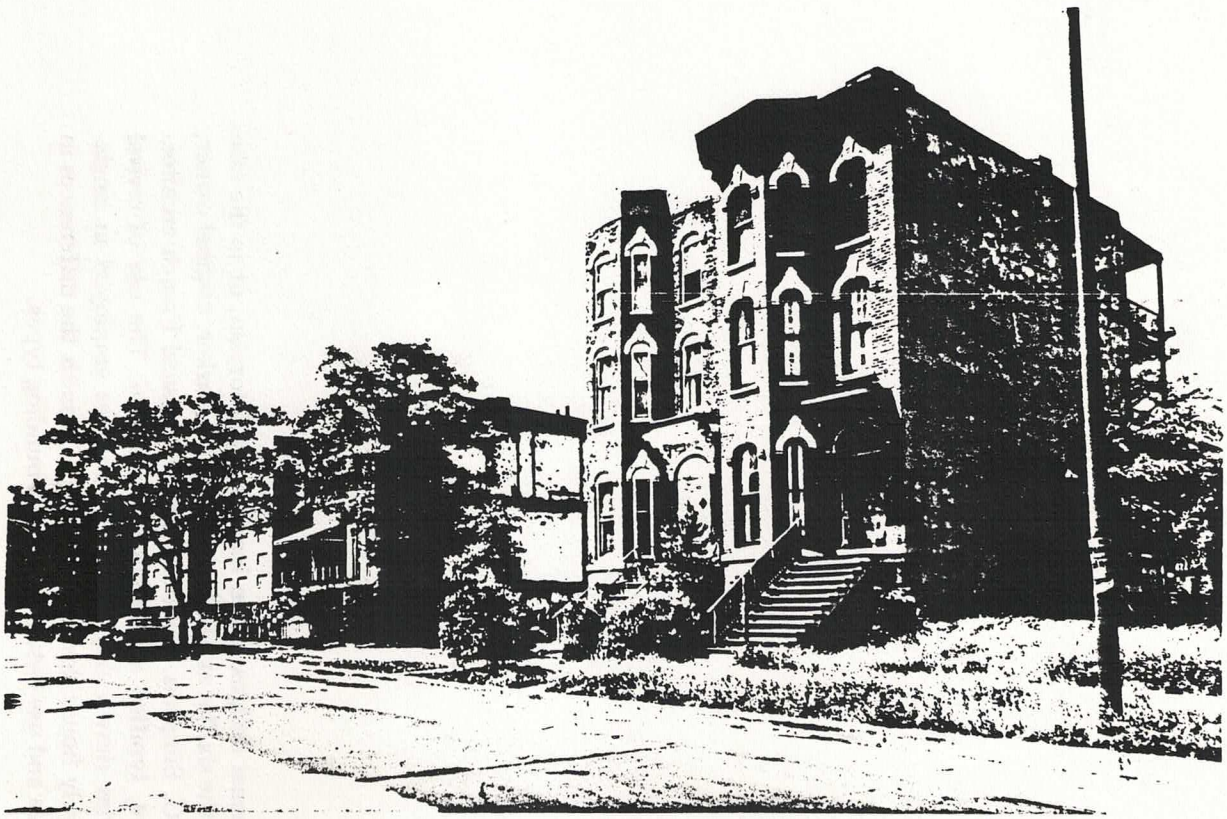


The steeply pitched gables and massive stone window enframements of the rowhouses at 3415-23 Giles (Frank Burley, original owner; 1894-95) are characteristic of the Tudor style, one of several picturesque revival styles employed in older area homes.

(Timothy Wittman, photographer)

Italianate designs, as seen in 3136-38 Giles, render a strong verticality through the use of ground-to-roof bays into which are set tiers of long narrow windows. Large elaborate cornices and massive ornamental lintels over doors and windows are additional characteristics. Unfortunately, many of the distinguished homes in Douglas adjoin large tracts of vacant land that reflect the deterioration the area has suffered over the last century.

(Gwen Sommers Yant, photographer)

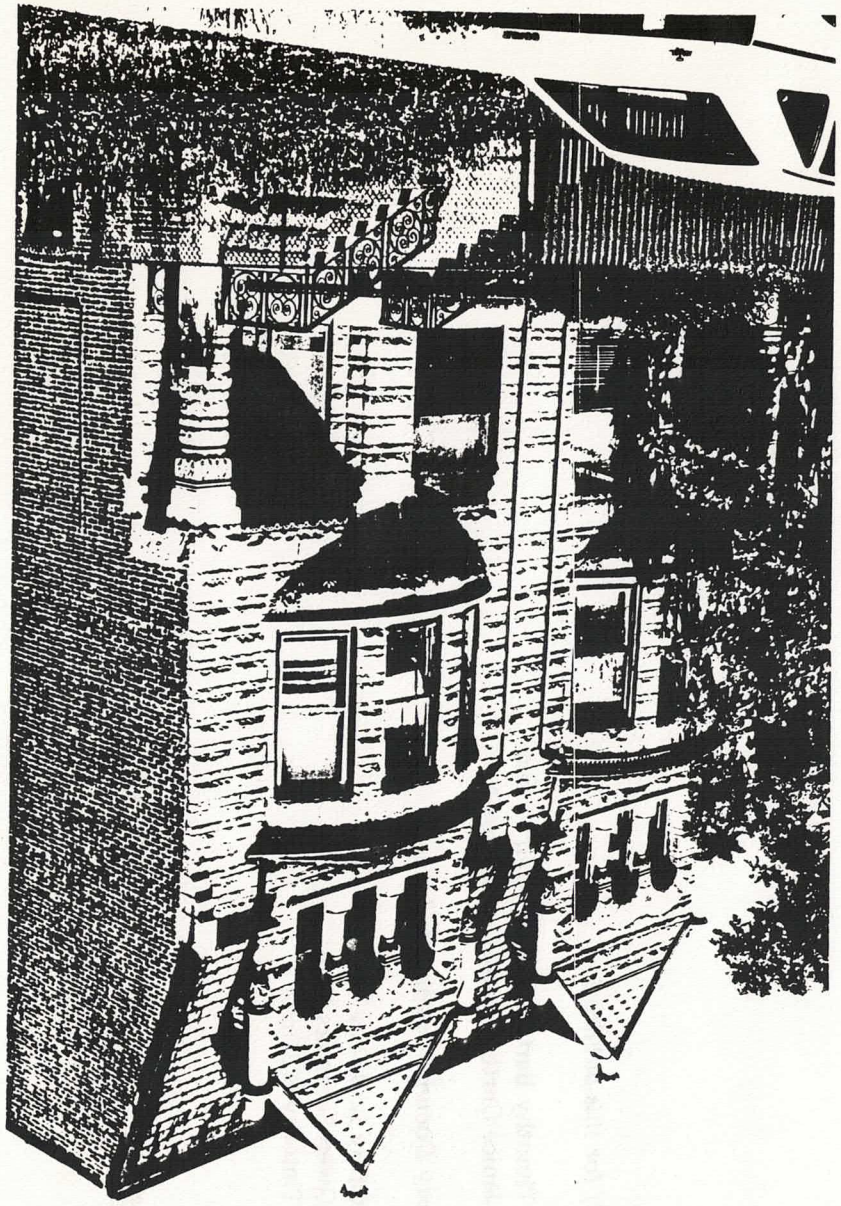


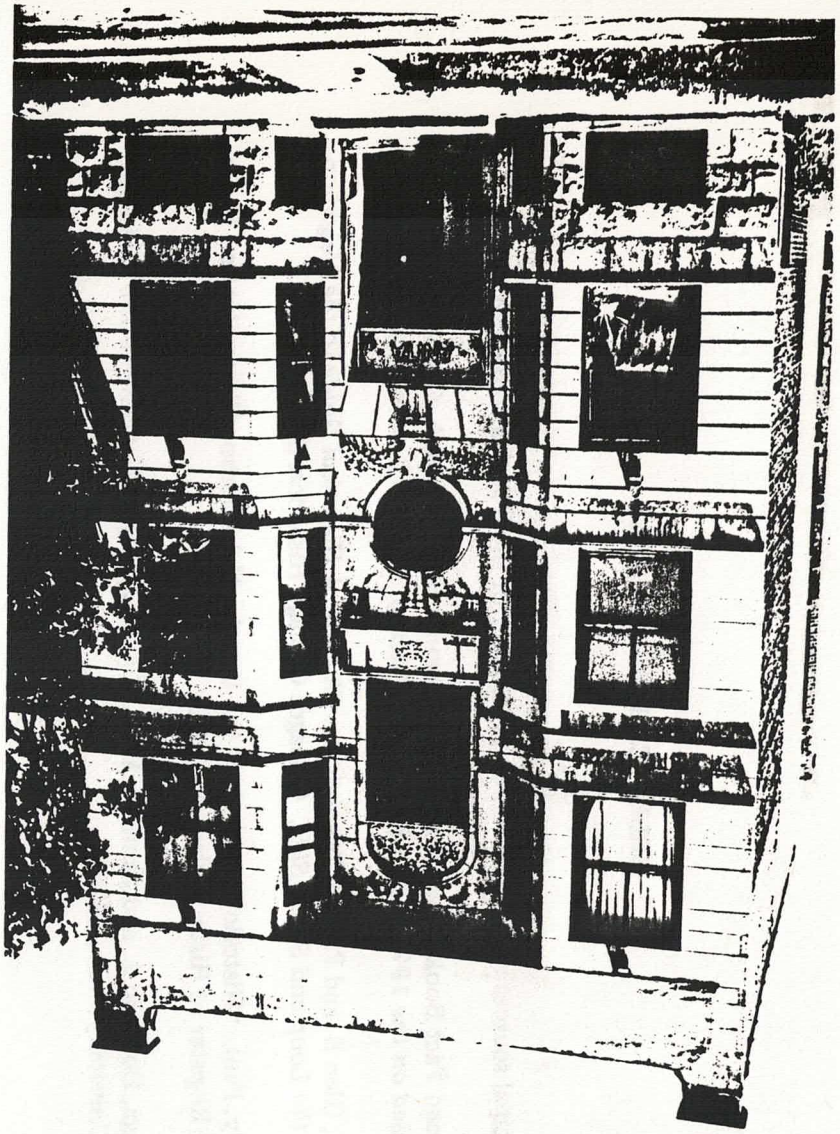
Formal designs, often inspired by Georgian, or in the case of the six-flat at 3126-28 Giles (C.S. Barker, original owner; J. G. Simpson, architect; 1898), classical French architecture, typified apartment construction. The use of revival styles drawn from the same sources employed in single-family house designs helped to diminish the differences in scale and use between the two building types.

(Timothy Wittman, photographer)

Romanesque architecture, as illustrated in the double house at 3151-53 Prairie, along with Queen Anne accounted for the majority of residential styles built in Douglas. These houses were built as rental properties by mortgage banker Martin Barbe in 1889 from designs by Joseph Thain.

(Cathy L. Rocca, photographer)





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Additional historical and architectural material related to the Douglas community and its architecture is located at the office of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks and is available to the public.

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The Commission on Chicago Landmarks was established in 1968 by city ordinance, and was given the responsibility of recommending to the City Council that specific landmarks be preserved and protected by law. The ordinance states that the Commission, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, can recommend any area, building, structure, work of art, or other object that has sufficient historical, community, or aesthetic value. Once the City Council acts on the Commission's recommendation and designates a Chicago Landmark, the ordinance provides for the preservation, protection, enhancement, rehabilitation, and perpetuation of that landmark. The Commission assists by carefully reviewing all applications for building permits pertaining to the designated Chicago Landmarks. This insures that any proposed alteration does not detract from the qualities that caused the landmark to be designated.

The Commission makes its recommendations to the City Council only after extensive study. This preliminary summary of information has been prepared by the Commission staff and was submitted to the Commission when it initiated consideration of the historical and architectural qualities of this potential landmark.

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